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ABSTRACT

The extent to which vocational schools are promoting the new job skills being demanded by employers was examined in complementary studies conducted Portugal and Greece. First, data were collected from questionnaires administered to 22 Portuguese students in initial training in a transports course and 47 Greek students in an electrical course (19 students) and a mechanics course (28 students). All three courses led to a level III professional qualification. Next, random samples of 25 Greek youths and 31 Portuguese youths were interviewed 10 years after they had earned a level III professional qualification. Finally, job announcements published in newspapers were reviewed to identify the job skills being demanded by employers. The Portuguese and Greek students chose vocational studies for the same reasons, namely, to attain a professional qualification and feel better prepared for the labor market. Deep differences were discovered between the Portuguese and Greek expectations about the skills most desirable for development of professional activity. The skills deemed desirable by students in both countries were teamwork, ability to adapt to change, and organizational and individual work management. The skills being demanded by employers were as follows: communication and argumentation, teamwork, ability to adapt to change, and organizational and individual work management. (Contains 25 references and 6 tables.) (MN)

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School - Work Transition and New Job Skills: An European Comparative Study

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School Transition and New Job Skills: An European Comparative Study

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships and the development of the new job skills related to the transition of the youth from school to work. Our study intends to compare the skills desirable and promoted by school in the youth opinion that are in initial training and in placement process. A complementary study in Portugal identified the skills demanded by the employers. The study was carried out in two European countries (Portugal and Greece). Two questionnaires were administrated in both countries and the job announcements in printed newspapers were collected. The problem, hypotheses, results, conclusions and implications were discussed.

Introduction

To understand the problem underlying the process of transition from school to work is crucial for the training/education of youth. Given the social implications involved in this transition, this issue increasingly assumes importance to research and to reflective thinking on the part of all those involved in the education/training of youth both in school and in the enterprises..

As the result of societal changes, there has been a rise in competitiveness, innovation, and the striving for quality in products and services. New organisational models are beginning to emerge, calling for more qualified human resources with new job skills and multiple abilities such as flexibility, teamwork, creativity, communication, interpersonal relationship, autonomy, use and manage of the ICT and perception to detect and solving problems.

Conceptual Framework

The school and it's relationships with the work seem to be a possible way to approach the training process to the new skills needed for the development of a professional career. However, the establishment of school/enterprise network, based on co-operation, is not easy to implement.

The education/training of the youth must be "cemented" on a progressive relationship between the educational system and the economic system. Co-operation and participation by enterprises in the education/training of the youth is becoming increasingly a fulcrum in the development of the knowledge and expertise that is

demanding by the labour market and the society. However the enterprises still have an economist point of view related to the process of education/training of human resources. Although we can notice some advances in the co-operation and participation of enterprises in this process. The organisation to training on the job, the apprenticeship, and the availability of collaborators to spend time with young trainees is some of the difficulties. Schools are often accused for not having a large view of work real needs. However the educational/training process must be seen as a systematic way of individual training for life, including work.

This fact means that the process of education/training became one of the most important aspects for the youth transition from school to work. According Vernières (1993) this is because the process is regarded as calmly and normally one, although it is a *"complex process"* (p.92). In the same line of thinking Oliveira (1998) states that placement is *"a process of social construction which results from an interaction between the professional path and education/training, and work and the employment systems"* (p.46). Correia (1994) argues that the present situation of placement is not "*a specific attribute of the youth and no longer placing training and employment in a sequenced time frame (...) but rather alternating moments of training, on-the-job training, precarious labour and unemployment"*(p.18

The transition of the youth from school to work can not be disconnected from social placement, which means that placement is a socio-professional process (Schwartz 1981; Azevedo 1994; Massimeli 1994; Groupe "Missile" 1996), a factor of social cohesion, which can reduce the social imbalances, and attenuate social exclusion. In this sense, we may say that placement is a new concept, which is characterised by Granget (1995) as the *"adoption of new practices in social action"*(p.42). For this author placement may be inserted as *"a characteriser of an evolution in the social thinking on the conservation of social cohesion"* (p.43).

The development of a professional activity is not only a way to get money, but it is something more that can motivate and give personal and professional satisfaction to the individual. According, Massimelli (1994:28) it is necessary to find new personal values, which will enable the youth to develop a new stance and a new attitude in relation to work as well as to their social and cultural activities. In this perspective we can say that the work is not limited solely to the production, but, fundamentally, as Alaluf states (1995) *"to the worker's relation to his work"* (p. 38).

We may therefore say that professional placement signifies for the individual not only a process in which he can develop a professional identity, but also a period of personal transformation and a change in his global identity (Hardy, 1994:47). Thus, it is important to recognise the youth real difficulties in their transition to the active life and help them in this crucial phase.

It 's important to be aware that the work in the future will be different from today. The learning process in a context of change requires reflection and reformulation according to the solicitations from society and enterprises. Thus, the development of new professional skills appears to be as one of a predominant factor, that enable the youth to develop their competencies in order to prepare them to face the challenges and so can help the school-work transition process and their professional placement in the labour market.

The reflection about initial education/training can not only be on the level of the academic learning processes but basically, how to promote the gaining of work experience. Some examples are linked to training in a formal or no-formal work contextsuch as alternate learning and training on the job; and creating networks among school and enterprises. According Schwartz (1981:42) on-the-job training can help the youth, by offering them the possibility of gathering information and of creating links that will enable them to face the difficulties of placement. This training will permit them to gain professional experience capable of valorising their initial education/training and thereby enriching their professional competencies.

It seems unquestionable that the main issue of the transaction from school to work is related to the training and the development of new job skills. To whom and how the training is delivery and which competencies it could provide are the main issue.

Qualification and Professional Skills

The European Union recommends a change of the term "qualifications" by "competencies". This decision is more complex than a simple alteration of terminology (Grootings, 1994:7).

The discussion that has arisen over the concept of competence derives from certain difficulties in its interpretation and from the fact that the term "competence" has

extended from the field of training and professional orientation to that of the management of human resources. Besides this, the valorisation of the concepts "qualification" and "competence" is dated. According Bekorian (1991) referred by Pires (1994) we can say that we are now witnessing a shift from *"the value of "qualification" at the centre of the studies in the decade of the 70' s to that of "competence" in the 80's and the 90's"* (p.60). For Stroobants (1993) this change means *"qualification was verified by knowing-and-doing, having progressively being replaced by competence in the wider sense"* (p.89). To precise this perspective Marsden (1994) states, *"the competencies are the result of professional qualifications and entrepreneurial qualifications"* (p.15).

Professional qualifications, just as those certified on the basis of training, require an ample variety of theoretical and practical knowledge, acquired through school learning and on-the-job training. The professional qualifications must be as large as possible. However, if the entrepreneurial qualifications result from training in a very formal and closed context then to acquire knowledge that can be adapted and transferred to other organisational environments is difficult (Marsden, 1994:16).
For Grootings (1994) *"the entrepreneurial management it became of prime importance to be well informed about the potential of each individual"* (p.7), that is, of their competencies, so that they are able to develop organisational strategies suited to the emerging work challenges. For this author the growing of "individualisation" in the management of human resources within the enterprise implies traditional labour relationships and traditional work organisation.

When "knowledge" becomes a synonym of "qualification", the concept of knowledge and knowing-how-to-do assume an essentially operative significance in discharging the professional activity. This is a technical-organisational perspective.

According to the socio-technical approach of the professional competencies used specially for continuous training, professional competence is understood by Pires (1994) as *"the capacity to carry out a job or a function in keeping with the norms commonly required in the job market"* (p.56). However, in our point of view each job or work task needs a specific set of professional competencies. In that sense Onstenk (2000) suggests, *"the degree of task complexity and task variety affect the skills required"* (p.2). Winterton (2000) refers *"different types of work organisations demands different degrees of investments in HRD, and different forms of work organisations constrain the opportunities for experiential development"* (p.5).

For Winterton (2000: p.3) there are four types of competencies: cognitive, functional, personal or behavioural and meta competencies. In his perspective the term competence is used in a holistic sense, that is to say *"the competence and competencies necessary for the current and future needs of the job and the individual"* (p.1). In Onstenk (2000) perspective the competencies are occupational; organisational; social-communicative s; and learning competencies. Thus, is not easy to compare competence profiles, or draw curricula, without having in mind the realities and contexts related to the theoretical concepts adopted.

In Duarte (1992) perspective the professional competencies involve human qualities, that is, those which a worker must have as a person: the technical qualities which include the methodological competencies that create mobility within the "professional family" and constitute the point of departure for future adaptations to change; the operative qualities consisting of specific competencies for responding to the concrete productive processes; and the organisational qualities, those which the worker must have in order to answer to the specific nature of the organisation in which he is placed. This approach includes the cognitive, the psychomotor and the affective-relational areas.

In the same perspective, Pires (1994) argues that competencies *"are the capacity to put into practice in a given professional situation a quantity of knowledge, capacities, behaviours and attitudes, that is, knowledge, knowing-how-to do and knowing-how-to-be"* (p.57), and *"knowing to be with others"* (Delors).

Bunk (1994:9) considers that professional competence, just as professional knowledge and professional qualifications, are based on a quantity of knowledge, abilities and capacities, are "a set of *professional knowledge aimed carry out defined tasks means the sum total of all the knowledge, ability and capacities"* (p.8). The difference is that, while the change in professional knowledge for professional qualification is quantitative, the change in professional qualification for professional competence is qualitative. In this context, for Bunk (1994) *"one who has professional competence is the one who has the knowledge, abilities and the capacities required for a profession, knows how to carry out tasks with autonomy, flexibility and has the capacity and willingness to actively participate in his surrounding professional environment and within the work organisation"* (p.9).

The demands of the labour market lead to rapid changes in the training market in order to answer to the outbreak of new and informal training systems, and to the need for new processes of evaluation, accreditation and validation of the competencies acquired, as well as their recognition (Molsosa, 1998).

Due to the new organisation models of work and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), one can not say that the development of a professional activity is only to do the tasks and problem and conflict solving. Boreham (2000) suggests that the use of the ICT can be used to the growth of global markets and to increase the intellectual content of work at virtually all organisational levels, challenging the distinction between manual and mental work which difference is embedded in the *Taylorist* system.

For human resources training the use of the ICT requires new occupational profiles and reorganisation of workplace (Boreham, 2000, p.3). For this author attaining the true potential of the ICT it is accepted that jobs should be redesigned to give employees the opportunity to exercise their initiative and knowledge (p.3). Also Dehnbostel (2000) argues that nowadays computer-integrated in work tasks and holistic work processes are became more important *"work and organisational concepts not only work tasks and structures are changing but the ways of learning and the relationship of formal and learning of experience as well"* (p.1). According Boreham (2000) the increasing of the telecommunications and the decline of the manufacture, the new generation of employees need to *"develop new constellations of aptitudes, and abilities which are transferable to a wide range of tasks"* (p.3). Nowadays, it is more and more important the development of ICT competencies like a crucial way to improving performance and sustaining competitive advantage.

Boreham (2000) states that the ICT can produce the creation of new types of work organisation based on network enterprises or in a more large sense on learning networks. According Lasonen (2000:9) learning networks should include good co-operation between school and enterprise. Dehnbostel (2000) argues that the network structures could improve an innovative process of learning that combine formal and informal learning where key qualifications like team-abilities and self-directed learning could be acquired. However, this process of learning needs *"work resources, machines and typical work task as well as learning facilities like notice-boards and multimedia, learning material and time for using it"* (p.1).

Winterton emphasises that *"key skills have been successful innovation, when measured by persistence"* (p.7). It is not sufficient to create innovative policy ideas without conditions to implement them. Thus, it is important to offer supporting conditions of training for trainers and teachers, not only to teach using new technologies, didactics models or approaches. It is important that teachers/ trainers together with employers could evaluate and reflect about the results and the impact of the training. This evaluation should be based on of how the development of the key skills can help the students to create a life project, to improve their chances to find a job, and assume how much this skills have a crucial role in the school transition to work. At the same time the results of national and transnational studies can help the dissemination of good practices which can be translated in recommendations for present and further studies. These studies can raise the importance of the key skills like a factor of the individual development as a person and as human resource and how this fact could strength the European Community in economic and social terms.

The education/training of the youth must be seen as a priority task in the fight against exclusion and social conflicts solving. A solid training for developing competencies can help the youth face with confidence their personal and professional future, based on the possibility of a life long learning. This betting on the youth, equipped with competencies, motivated, energetic, with creativity and new ideas, is a decisive factor which can greatly contribute to the development and the strengthening of the European Union.

It is necessary research and reflection on the problem of the education/training of the youth and the emergence of new job skills, as well as their importance in the present context of the European Union in face of world competitiveness.

Empirical Study

The study is part of the European DUOQUAL Project. The empirical study was carried out, with the purpose of shedding light on the importance of the new job skills in the transition of the youth from school to work and the factors, which can minimise the professional placement. The different perspectives of the new job skills importance and what is their meaning for Portuguese and Greek students involved in the placement process were analysed.

The study was developed in three main parts: i) The new job skills desirable and promoted by school in the opinion of the students in initial training; ii) The importance of the new job skills and the role of school in their development in the opinion of the youth in placement; iii) The new job skills demands by employers as viewed from job announcements.

1. - "New Job Skills" Desirable and Promoted by School in the Opinion of the Students in Initial Training

The comparative study was based on the answers given to a questionnaire drawn up by the Portuguese partner (six large emerging questions) which cover a large field of issues. This questionnaire was administrated in Portugal and replied in Greece.

The Portuguese sample comprised of 22 students (18 boys and 4 girls, from 18 to 22 years old) in initial training of level III professional qualification during the final year of their academic studies, from a Professional School (Transports course).

The Greek sample consisted of 47 students (19 boys students of Electrical course and 28 students - 27 boys and 1 girl - of Mechanics from 17 to 24 years old) in initial training of level III professional qualification – Unified Integrated Lyceum.

Findings

The data produced the following findings:

The main reasons for choosing a vocational course of Professional School and Unified Integrated Lyceum are: to attain a professional qualification (Pt 86.4%); (Gr. 72.3%); to feel better prepared for the labour market (Pt 81.9%); (Gr. 76.6%); to develop their personal competencies and job skills which should prepare them to face the labour market challenges (Pt 43.9%); (Gr. 19,1%); to present personal and professional meaningful experience in order to facilitate professional placement in the labour market (Pt 43.9%); (Gr. 23,4%); to dislike the subject matter learned in the general courses (Pt 31.8%); (Gr. 46.8%). According the results it is clear a close relationship between skills considered desirable by the students and the reasons for choosing a certain vocational model.

It is not relevant the percentage of youth, which assume that have been chosen the course of Professional School and Unified Integrated Lyceum, because school failure on general courses (Pt 3.1%) and (Gr. 6.4%). However, when the youth are inquired about the reasons why they have been chosen Professional School and Unified Integrated Lyceum we find a discrepancy between the results. The Portuguese youth failed at least one year in the general courses (95.5%), while the Greek youth failed 10.6%. According these results we may infer that is no relation between the choice of vocational studies and the levels of failure in general courses.

The reasons that students recognise the importance that the school promote the development of the new job skills are connected with their reasons for choosing a vocational studies such as: to develop personal and professional new job skills which would prepare them to face emerging challenges in the labour market (Pt 43.9%); (Gr. 42.4%); to acquire significant personal and professional experience for facilitating professional placement in the labour market (Pt 43,9%); (Gr. 43.2%). We can notice that the two main reasons that students recognise the importance of the training at school are related with professional placement.

To go deeper in the analyses of the connection between expectations and realities, the following comparative table (I) presents the % of the skills desirable and promoted by school in the students opinion.

Table I - Relation between desirable skills and skills promoted by school (students opinion)

Skills	Desirable		Promoted by school	
	Pt %	Gr. %	Pt %	Gr. %
team-work	53.0	56,0	56.5	42,9
personal relationships	45.5	34,0	71.2	53,2
ability to adapt to change	53.0	60,3	50.0	49,3
organisation and individual work management	53.0	61,0	69.7	55,7
communication (oral, written) and argumentation	46.6	46,3	52.7	47,7
learn to learn and learn to think	47.7	63,8	45.5	41,1
socialisation	22.7	44,7	41.8	47,0

For the Greek students the expectations regarding the skills desirable are higher than the Portuguese is. However in the Portuguese students opinion the skills promoted by school are higher that for the Greeks. According these results we may infer, that the

Portuguese students have a better school image according their expectations about the skills promoted by the school.

The skills less desirable by the Portuguese and by the Greek students are personal relationship and socialisation. However, in their opinion the skills more developed by school are personal relationship besides organisational and individual work management.

It will be interesting to investigate why the student's had different perspectives concerning the importance given to personal relationship and socialisation. For Portugal we can formulate some explicative hypotheses such as: i) the school has a large view of the social and professional changes; ii) the students put up the value of their school or their course; iii) the school where the data was collected was a small school with a local curricula; iv) the students have some difficulties to know the real meaning of the concepts related to the inquired skills. For the Greek we can formulate some explicative hypotheses such as: i) Greek students seem to centre in school the main role for answering to their educational needs; ii) the difference between the perception of the desirable competencies and the promoted by school, might be because students attend courses at national level; iii) the students have some difficulties to know the real sense of the concepts meaning.

2. - The Importance of the "New Job Skill" and the Role of School in their Development, in the Opinion of the Youth in Placement.

A questionnaire drawn up by the Greek partner (two questions selected from a large questionnaire designed for structured interviews) was administrated and was mailed together with a sealed reply. The two questions were expanded into four sub-topics: *working in a team, using a foreign language, using a computer, planning, budgeting and managing tasks.* The replies were given according to the scale: *very, adequately, not at all.*

The Greek sample consisted of 25 youth of the Integrated Multilevel Lyceum, drawn randomly from a group of 127 graduates out of a sample of about one thousand youth. These youth were interviewed 10 years after they were released from school in 1989 with a level III professional qualification, and had declared matched employment at the

time of the interview. The Portuguese sample comprised of 31 youth (from 18 to 27 years old) from a Professional School in their first year of work in the transports sector. Data was generated from the answers given to a questionnaire administrated by mail. The youth left the education system in 1995/97 with a level III professional qualification

Findings

One of the factors that might have contributed to the findings may be related to the fact that the Greek sample refers to the youth that left the education system in 1989.The processing of data derived from the questionnaire in Greece and in Portugal produced the following findings:

Table II - How important do you consider each of the following skills in the performance of your daily work tasks:

Portugal

Skills	Very		Adequately		Not at all	
working in a team	27	87.1%	3	9.7%	1	3,2%
using a foreign language	8	25.8%	21	67.7%	2	6.5%
using a computer	25	80.6%	6	19.4%	0	0.0%
planning, budgeting and managing tasks	23	74.2%	8	25.5%	0	0.0%

Greece

Skills	Very		Adequately		Not at all	
working in a team	17	68.0%	8	32.0%	0	0.0%
using a foreign language	6	24.0%	10	40.0%	9	36 %
using a computer	13	52.0%	3	12.0%	9	36 %
planning, budgeting and managing tasks	13	52.0%	10	40.0%	2	8.0%

According these results, the ability to work in a team is considered very important by the Greek (68.0%) and by the Portuguese (87.1%) youth in placement.

Communication skills, such as the use of a foreign language, were considered by the Greek youth (40.0%) and by the Portuguese youth (67.7%) as being of adequate importance in exercising professional activity. However, the opinion of the Greek youth on the need of mastering a foreign language is lower since only 36.0% considered that these skills are important for their professional activity. For the Greek youth, it may be said that skills in communication, notably the use of a foreign language is of little importance.

In the opinion of the Greek youth (52.0%) and of the Portuguese (80.6%), computer skills are very important to their professional work. In the case of the Greek youth the

opinion expressed is not very consistent, as 36.0% consider that computer skills are not at all important.

The Portuguese youth considered that the school helped them adequately (54.9%) in developing teamwork skills, while 41.9% were of the opinion that the school helped them very much. However, 60% of the Greek youth inquired felt that their school helped them very much in developing teamwork skills. This means that both in Portugal and Greece the school met the expectations and needs of the students as far as supplying them with teamwork skills.

The Portuguese youth (74.2%) attaches more importance to the skills of Planning, Organisation and Management than do the Greek youth (52.0%). There is, however, an overwhelming majority for both groups to consider these skills as being very or adequately important.

Table III - To what extent your school helped you to acquire the following skills:

Portugal

Skills	Very		Adequately		Not at all	
working in a team	13	41.9%	17	54.9%	1	3.2%
using a foreign language	6	19.4%	23	74.2%	2	6.4%
using a computer	13	41.9%	17	54.9%	1	3.2%
planning, budgeting and managing tasks	13	41.9%	18	54.1%	0	0.0%

Greece

Skills	Very		Adequately		Not at all	
working in a team	15	60.0%	7	28.0%	3	12%
using a foreign language	1	4.0%	10	40.0%	14	56%
using a computer	6	24.0%	7	28.0%	12	48%
planning, budgeting and managing tasks	3	12.0%	12	48.0%	10	40%

For 56.0% of the Greek youth the school did not at all help them in developing foreign language skills. Hence the little interest shown by the Greek youth to develop communication skills. In the case of the Portuguese youth, 74.2% are of the opinion that the school helped them adequately in developing foreign language skills. In other words, it may be that the Greek school is not efficient in the teaching of a foreign language. The school practitioners and the policy decision-makers may consider new didactic approaches for teaching a foreign language in the vocational schools.

The Portuguese youth consider that the school helped them develop computer skills adequately (54.9%). For the Greek youth (48.0%) their school did not help them at all to develop these skills. We may infer that the fact that a slight majority of the Greek youth consider computer skills as being important could mean i) their school did not promote proper learning environments to motivate students about the potential and importance of computers in the workplace. Another hypotheses can be formulated: i) there were few national programmes for supplying computers to the schools. ii) the teachers were not sensitised by the educational leadership to promote the use of computers in learning contexts; iii) the sample of the Greek youth refers to the state of the education system back in 1989, when computers were not used broadly in the curriculum. All these hypotheses can explain the results.

For 48.0% of the Greek youth their school helped them adequately to develop of *Planning*, *Organisation* and *Management* skills. Nevertheless, the margin here is very fragile, as 40.0% of the Greek youth consider that the school did help them not at all in developing these skills. The Portuguese youth consider that the school helped them adequately (54.1%).

3. - "New Job Skill" Demands by Employers as viewed from Job Announcements

In order to complement the study above mentioned with some additional relevant data, an effort was made to explore which skills were in demand by employers in Portugal. Thus, during one month, all daily and weekly newspapers published in Lisbon were searched. From this study a set of data were collected. These data that lead to put in evidence the importance attached by employers to new the job-skills and for establishing a relationship between the job skills demanded by that, and the skills promoted in the education/training process to prepare the youth for the job placement process.

Findings

According the data collected we made a table where we can analyse the skills demanded by the employers per sector of activity.

Table V - Skills in demand by employers for sector of activity

Skills	Primary Sector	Secondary Sector	Tertiary Sector
1 - knowledge of languages	1	20	67
2 - computer knowledge in user's view		16	83
3 - facility for interpersonal relationship	1	11	33
4 - work in a team	1	13	43
5 - capacity for analysis			4
6 - capacity for planning and organisation	1	9	28
7 - initiative		14	26
8 - communication	1	18	46
9 - autonomy			8
10 - responsibility		16	33
11 - dynamism		23	54
12 - creativity/innovation			12
13 - leadership	1	6	19
14 - self-confidence		1	
15 - power of persuasion		1	3
16 - flexibility		1	1
17 - accuracy		1	1
18 - entrepreneurial			3
19 - dedication		1	
20 - ambitiousness		1	
21 - business sense		2	
22 - resilience		1	4
23 - multijob capacity			1

From the analyses of job announcements the first thing one notes is the vastly different job offers, by sector of economic activity. The tertiary sector seems to be predominant in employability. The primary sector, in which there are no jobs offers at the level of the print media is another interesting finding. However in accordance with the annual report of the *«Situação do Mercado de Emprego 97»*, the sector of «Agriculture, Livestock, Game Hunting and Silviculture» is the one that accounts for the global rise in jobs (14.1%), have being created 71,200 new jobs in 1997 (Job Market '97) (MTS/IEFP, 97).

Based on the results of the table V, we group the new job skills according the following dimensions related to the previous study described in point 2: Work in a team - 4; 9; 11; Using of a foreign language - 1; 5; 8; Using of computer - 2; 12; 14; 16; Planning, budgeting and managing tasks - 6; 7; 10.

According to the grouping results, we can present the table VI:

Table VI – Skills demands by job announcements per activity sector

Skills	Primary Sector	Secondary Sector	Tertiary Sector
	%	%	%
Work in a team	40.0%	27.5%	23.3%
Using of a foreign language	40.0%	29.0%	35.6%
Using of computer	0.0%	13.7%	21.3%
Planning, budgeting and managing tasks	20.0%	29.8%	19.8%

There are significant differences in the skills of *Planning, budgeting and managing tasks* between the secondary sector (29.8%) and the tertiary sector (19.8%) and the *Using the computer skills* with 13.7% and 21.6%, respectively. The *Using of a foreign language* is exigent in the tertiary sector (35,6%) and in the secondary sector (29.0%). Although the tertiary sector is the sector of economic activity, which offers a greater number of jobs through the print media, and according the data collected, it can not be said that this sector actually demands a series of skills very different from those demanded by the secondary sector.

Academic qualifications, from the standpoint of employability are, for many organisations, an important aspect in the professional life of the youth. In order to get an idea of the importance of formal qualifications in professional activity we may analyse the employment and unemployment rates in Portugal.

According IEFP (1998) there are 61,619 youth with secondary studies that are unemployed. The figures reveal that there were 415,900 (85.4%) employed young graduates from general courses of secondary education and 71,000 (14.6%) employed young graduates from vocational courses of secondary education. In effect, these figures evidence the importance of VET in the current panorama of the employability, VET offers a better product according to the demands of the job market. Perhaps it is because of this that in the last several years we have notice a growing demand by the employers for vocational course graduates. Another important question is the increase of students that choose vocational courses. Maybe the reason is to answer to the demands of the employers and that the youth with courses of the Professional Schools have higher salaries them the youth with the general courses.

According to the figures obtained from the print media, job offers in some cases indicate, for instance, a demand which does not seek collaborators holding any formal academic or professional qualification or diploma such as those of the 6th year or the 11th year of schooling referring to minimum qualifications. We formulate the hypotheses that this fact is connected to economical aspects, which are substantiated by recourse to cheaper labour force, or by the absence of any knowledge on the recent educational reform.

Another interesting aspect of the results obtained from the daily print media refers to the possibility of comparing the skills required by employers, with the corresponding expectations of youth in the initial training stages, i.e. those skills which the youth consider that are required of them by the employers.

According to the results, the interpersonal skills, the ability for self learn, learn to think and, the socialisation skills, are the skills in shortage in the supply when compared with those demanded by the employers. The crosschecking figures enables us to know which skills are in demand in the job market, and inform schools accordingly to include these skills in their courses so that they may respond to the requirements of the employers.

CONCLUSIONS

Portuguese and Greek students present the same reasons to choose vocational studies: to attain a professional qualification and to feel better prepared for the labour market. Thus, seems a close relationship between the skills desirable by the students and the reasons for choosing a professional educational/training model.

Both groups of students in initial educational/training consider that is important the school promotes the development of new job skills, which would prepare them to face, the emerging challenges in the labour market and to acquire significant personal and professional experience for facilitating their professional placement.

There are deep differences between the Portuguese and Greek expectations about the skills most desirable for the development of the professional activity. The skills desirable by Portuguese and Greek students (organisational and individual work management, ability to adapt to change, teamwork and ability to learn how to learn and learn how to

think) are identical, although the priorities are different. However, both groups of students consider the skills personal relationship and socialisation are the ones less desirable for developing a professional activity.

The skills promoted by Portuguese and Greek schools are identical (personal relationship, organisational and individual work management, communication (oral, written) and argumentation. The Portuguese (ability to learn how to learn and learn how to think, and socialisation) and Greek students (ability to learn how to learn and learn how to think and teamwork) have different perceptions about the skills less promoted by school.

For the Greek and Portuguese youth in placement the communication skills such as the use of a foreign language are considered as being important for their professional career. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the majority of the Greek youth the role of the school in developing foreign language skills was not effective, where as for the Portuguese this role was adequate to their expectations.

Both populations participating in the study considered very important computer skills. However, for the Greek youth the use of the computer as being of medium or of no importance, for their job tasks. The Greek youth considered that their school did not help them in an effective manner to develop these skills. These results may signify that for the Greeks the use of computer seems not useful for their professional activities. This fact may result from the different phases of technological development in which the study was carried out.

The Greek and Portuguese youth in placement consider the skills of *Planning, Budgeting* and *Managing* as being very important for their job tasks and that the school help them to develop these skills.

We found differences between the skills more desirable for the students at initial training (teamwork, ability to adapt to change and organisational and individual work management) and the skills required by the employers (communication (oral, written) and argumentation, teamwork, ability to adapt to change and organisational and individual work management.

There are contradictions between the fact of the both groups of youth in placement consider that the teamwork skills is very important for as their needs/or will be in the job market and the fact of they consider that the school helped them very much in developing these skills.

For the Greek students the expectations regarding the skills desirable for professional activity are higher than for the Portuguese. However, in the Portuguese students' opinion the skills promoted by school are higher than for the Greek.

According the results collected in the print media the largest job offerings is by the tertiary sector. The primary sector does not announce job offerings through the print media.. This fact may result from the different ways of get a job. The personal knowledge and relationship with neighbours and friends could be the privileged way for get a job.

The skills most in demand by the employers in the secondary and tertiary sectors are identical, although the priorities are different. Both sectors attach the greatest value to the communication skills (oral, written) and argumentation, teamwork, ability to adapt to change, and organisational and individual work management.

The minimum qualifications in demand by the secondary and tertiary sectors present marked differences. That is to say, whereas in the secondary sector the minimum required is the 2nd cycle of basic education, in the tertiary sector the minimum required is the 3rd cycle of basic education. We may refer that this fact is related to economic nature, which are by to recruit cheaper work force, while a significant number of human resources with higher education are unemployed. The demands of qualifications are higher in the tertiary sector.

The growing demand for vocational courses in the past several years is in keeping with the valorisation of the new job skills.

As concluding remarks we may say that Portuguese and Greek partnership is proving highly effective European collaboration. The network is developing into a living framework of common understanding of the importance of the new job skills for the transition of the youth from the school to work and promote the debate recognising deficits and innovation with the potential of transferability.

This joint research about skill needs and youth expectations analyses strength the impact orientation of VET toward the economic system and the implementation of the necessary bridge between school and work.

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